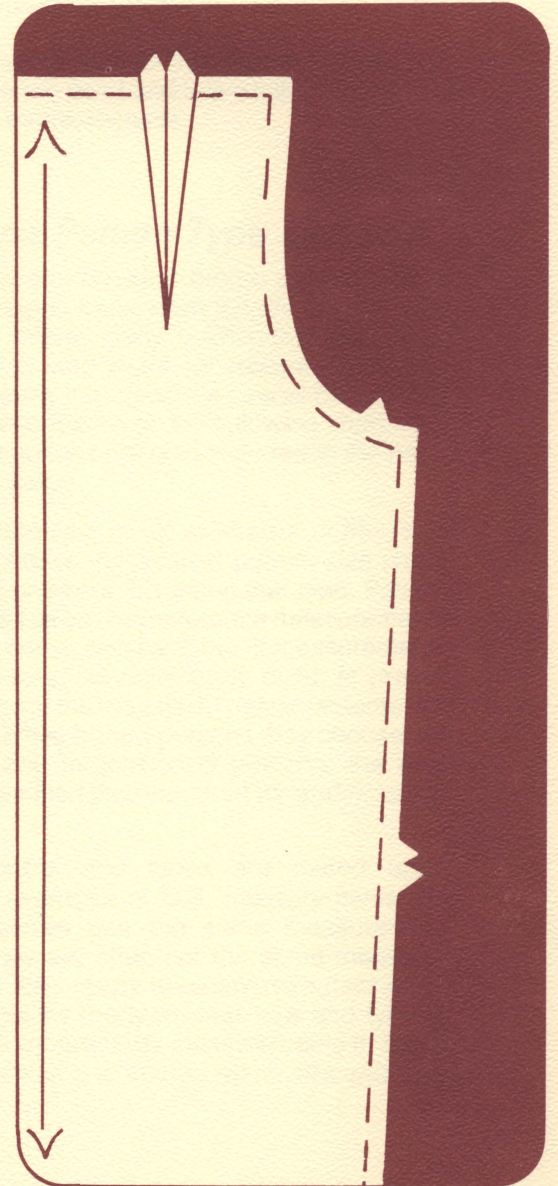


pattern selection



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Pattern Selection

Becky Culp*

Patterns are basic to sewing. Pattern companies study the latest fashion and fabric trends and interpret these into specific patterns for a variety of sizes, sewing abilities and needs. Patterns are a guide for purchasing needed sewing supplies and constructing the garment step-by-step. Choosing a pattern wisely helps create a garment that is becoming, fashionable and enjoyable to wear, and an asset to the wardrobe.

Measuring for a Pattern

Accurate measurements are the key to buying the correct pattern size and type. These principles will guide you in taking accurate measurements:

- Take measurements over the undergarments that will be worn.
- Measurements should be taken snugly, not too tightly or loosely.
- Have someone help you take your own measurements so that the tape measure and your posture remain straight when measuring.
- Take measurements often. Inches may shift even though body weight remains the same.
- Use an accurate tape measure made of fiberglass, nonstretch plastic or coated cloth. Some cloth measuring tapes may shrink and plastic ones stretch. Check units against a metal or wooden measure for accuracy.
- Circumference measurements should be taken so that they are parallel to the floor.
- Stand straight and relaxed but not stiff when measurements are taken.
- Tie a string around the natural waistline for a reference point and leave it there while taking all measurements.

Determining Pattern Type and Size


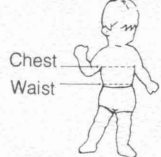
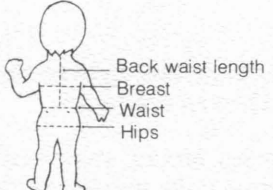
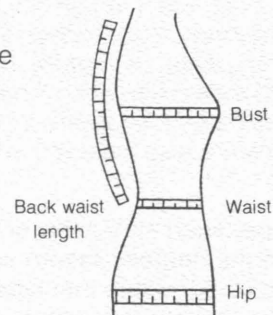
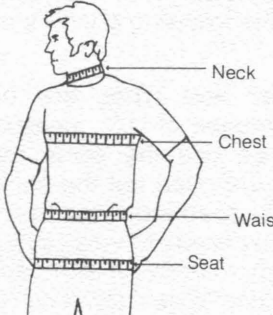
Pattern type is decided before pattern size. It is based on height, back waist length (for girls and women), and overall body build rather than age. *Larger waistline* and *petite* or *mature figure* are examples of terms that describe overall body build. Refer to the descriptions on the following chart. Pattern type descriptions are also included in the back of a pattern catalog.

After pattern type (such as Misses' or Men's) is determined, choose the nearest pattern size (such as Misses' 10 or Men's 42) within that type. Pattern sizes are based upon circumference measurements such as bust, chest, waist and hip. If measurements fall between sizes, consider body build, fit preferences, and where the majority of measurements fall. For example, small-boned persons may choose the smaller size and larger-boned persons, the next larger size. See the following chart for additional information.

Pattern sizes and types are based upon standards or averages of U.S. measurements. All pattern companies use the same measurement standards. They are often not the same measurements used by ready-to-wear manufacturers. Buying patterns by ready-to-wear size and type is not reliable. Compare body measurements to those in the pattern catalog to decide which size and type to select.

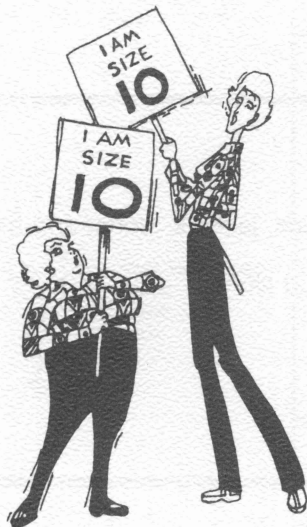
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PATTERN MEASUREMENT, TYPE AND SIZE

| Family members | Measurements needed | How to Measure | Pattern types | Most important measurement for determining pattern size |
|---|---------------------|---|--|--|
| Babies  | Height | From top of head to feet, lying straight. | Babies (infants not walking) | Weight |
| | Weight | Without clothes. | | |
| Toddlers  | Chest | Around fullest part of chest. | Toddlers (wearing diapers) | Chest |
| | Waist | Around natural waistline or where clothes are worn at waistline. | | |
| | Height | From top of head to floor without shoes. | | |
| Children  | Breast | Around fullest part of chest. | Children (young boys and girls grouped together) | Breast (for dresses, jackets, shirts, and blouses) Hip (for pants and skirts) |
| | Waist | Around natural waistline or where clothes are worn at waistline. | | |
| | Hip | Around fullest part of hip. | | |
| | Back waist length | From prominent bone at back base of neck to natural waistline. | | |
| | Height | From top of head to floor without shoes. | | |
| Girls Teenage Girls Women  | High bust | Across back, under arms and above bust. | Determined by back waist length, height and overall body build Girls (growing girls who have not yet begun to mature) Chubbie (growing girls over average weight for their height) Young Junior/Teen (developing teen figures, 5'1"-5'3" or 1.55m-1.60m tall) Junior (well proportioned, shorter waisted figure, 5'4"-5'5" or 1.63m-1.65m tall) Junior Petite (well proportioned, shorter junior figure, 5'-5'1" or 1.52m-1.55m tall) Misses (well-proportioned and developed figure, 5'5"-5'6" or 1.65m-1.68m tall) Miss Petite (well-proportioned, shorter Misses' figure, 5'2"-5'4" or 1.57m-1.63m tall) Half Size (fully developed figure with shorter back waist length and larger waistline and hipline in proportion to bustline, 5'2"-5'3" or 1.57m-1.60m tall) Women's (larger, longer and more fully mature figure, 5'5"-5'6" or 1.65m-1.68m tall) | Bust (for dresses, jackets, shirts and blouses) Note: The <i>high bust</i> measurement is used in place of the bust measurement for bustlines that are larger than average in proportion to the overall body build. If the high bust measures 4" smaller than the full bust, buy according to that measurement. For example, if the high bust measures 32" (81.5 cm) and the full bust 36" (91.5cm), substitute the high bust measurement for the full bust. Buy the size nearest to the 32" (81.5 cm) measurement as though it were the full bust. The pattern will need to be altered through the full bust, but the garment will fit the figure better than if bought according to the 36" (91.5 cm) size. Hip (for pants and skirts) |
| | Bust | Across back, under arms and across fullest part of bust. | | |
| | Waist | Around natural waistline or where clothes are worn at waistline. | | |
| | Hips | Measure the hipline at the fullest part of the hips (usually 7-9" below the waistline). | | |
| | Back waist length | From prominent bone at back base of neck to natural waistline. | | |
| | Height | From top of head to floor without shoes. | | |
| Boys Teenage Boys Men  | Neck | Around base of neck (Add 1/2" for neckband measurement.) | Determined by height and overall body build Boys (growing boys) Teen Boys (growing young men not yet full adult build.) Men's (average build, 5'10" or 1.77m tall) | Neck or neckband and chest (for shirts) Chest (for jackets) Seat (for pants) |
| | Chest | Around fullest part of chest, under arms and across back. | | |
| | Waist | Around natural waistline and over shirt. | | |
| | Seat (hips) | Around fullest part of seat. | | |
| | Height | From top of head to floor without shoes. | | |

Pattern Alteration

Since patterns are based upon an average of measurements, most patterns require alterations to fit. Lengthening or shortening and adding or decreasing width in one or more places are often needed. Selecting the correct size and type pattern reduces the amount or number of alterations required. (For specific alteration techniques see Extension publication MP-1037 *Personalizing Patterns*.)



Pattern Ease

Wearing and styling ease are added to patterns for comfort and fashion. The correct pattern size and type will not measure the same as your measurements because of this added ease.



The amount of ease varies according to pattern size and type, fashion trends, garment design and recommended fabrics. Large size patterns have more ease allowed than smaller size patterns. Styling ease varies with current fashion trends such as fitted, semi-fitted or loosely-fitted looks. Study the pattern illustration for a clue to the amount of styling ease incorporated. Different pattern companies may vary slightly in their interpretation of comfort and styling ease. This accounts for different measurements for similarly designed patterns of the same size and type. Stretchable fabrics such as knits require less ease than nonstretchable fabrics because stretchable fabrics will give for comfort and movement. Choose patterns designed for the type of fabric to be used. Extra ease is incorporated in specialized garment designs such as maternity wear or coats; therefore, larger sizes are not needed. Choose the size usually worn for other garments.

Pattern Categories

Pattern companies provide a variety of patterns to allow for individual preferences, sewing abilities and needs. These different categories are helpful when choosing a pattern. Promotional names for each pattern company's categories appear in the pattern catalog and on the pattern envelope. Patterns may be categorized in one or more of the following areas.

- **Fast and easy** patterns are simple to sew and usually have few pattern pieces. Because pattern pieces are often combined to make fewer and larger pieces, fitting and pattern alteration may be more difficult. Study the illustrations showing the garment seamlines and pattern pieces before purchasing.
- **Special how-to-do** patterns contain more detailed sewing instructions for making a certain part of the garment, such as how to topstitch or make a collar. These added instructions are helpful for the beginning sewer, particularly when trying a difficult technique or attempting a technique the first time.
- **Special fabric** patterns are designed for a specific fabric such as stretchable knits. Techniques particularly suitable for sewing that fabric may also be included. Patterns designed for stretchable knits are cut smaller to accommodate the extra stretch of the fabric and will be too small if made of nonstretchable fabric. Patterns recommended for specific fabrics such as knits or fake furs have design lines that are particularly suitable for the characteristics of that fabric.

- **Figure flattery** patterns contain slenderizing vertical seamlines. Fabrics and accessories should be selected that emphasize these vertical lines rather than camouflaging or competing with them.
- **Multi-sized or fitting assistance** patterns include adjustable or multi cutting lines or extra instructions for altering and fitting. This information is particularly helpful for in-between sizes, figures that are part one size and part another, or specialized fitting problems. Multi-sized patterns are particularly good choices for children because as the child grows, patterns can continue to be used. When a smaller size within a pattern piece will be used, trace that size onto transparent paper or fabric to preserve the original pattern.
- **Specialized design** patterns include basic, classic, casual, contemporary or designer looks. They may also meet special needs such as maternity, lingerie, sportswear or bridal. Some designer patterns are more expensive and/or difficult to sew, but result in a couture-looking garment.

Patterns and Fabrics

Selecting a fabric that is compatible with the pattern design contributes to the success of the garment. Illustrations in the pattern catalog and on the pattern envelope are a useful guide in choosing fabric. Designs with unusual seaming or stitching details are most compatible with plain or solid fabrics which emphasize these lines. In addition to colors, fabric design and trim, the apparent texture and drape of the fabric illustrated in the pattern design is particularly important. For example, choosing a stiff or bulky fabric for a look with softly gathered lines destroys the entire effect. The "recommended or suggested fabrics" section on the back of the pattern envelope lists compatible fabrics.

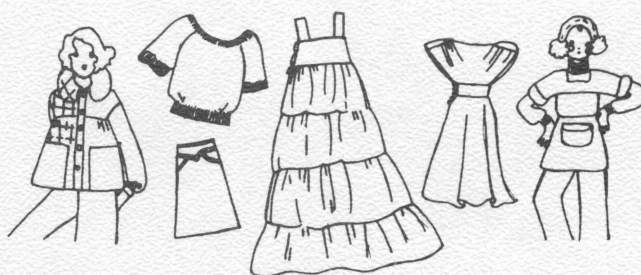


Diagonal, plaid or striped fabrics are not suitable for certain pattern designs. This information will be indicated on the pattern. Required angles of some seams and grainlines of pattern pieces may make it impossible to match obvious fabric designs at the seamlines.

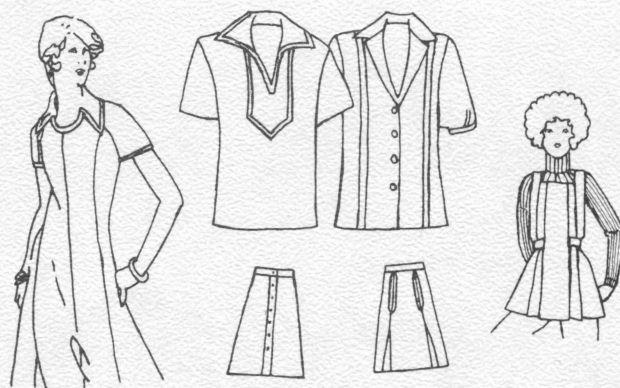
If in doubt about which fabric to choose for a certain pattern, look at the pattern envelope illustration, pictures in magazines or similar ready-to-wear garments. Decide what fabrics look best with certain designs.

Design Lines

Consider the major structural lines of the pattern. Horizontal lines and fullness add width and appear to shorten the figure. Gathered skirts, horizontal yokes, kimono sleeves and ruffles add width. Vertical lines such as princess seams add height and make the figure appear to be slimmer.



Shorter and Wider



Taller and Slimmer

Study the front and back structural lines of the pattern as illustrated in the pattern catalog or on the pattern envelope. Visualize the effect of the pattern design on the body. If in doubt concerning whether or not a particular design will be becoming, compare the lines to garments you already enjoy wearing or try on similar ready-to-wear garments. Choose a fabric that is personally becoming as well as compatible with the pattern design.

Recycling Patterns

Save money by recycling patterns you already have. Pattern pieces can be interchanged from pattern to pattern if they are the same size and type and a compatible design. Pattern pieces are often more successfully interchanged if they are made by the same company. For example, sleeve patterns may be switched if a long full sleeve is preferred rather than a straight short sleeve. However, before switching, always line up the two pattern pieces and check to see that they are the same size and shape along the seamline that will be sewn into the armhole.

If they are not, use the original sleeve cap and attach the bottom section of the long full sleeves. Redraw cutting lines where joined to form a smooth line.

Change the look of a pattern by choosing different fabrics or trims. Combine several fabrics in the same garment.

Consider using one garment from one pattern and the other garment from another, such as the jacket from one and the skirt from another.

Trade patterns with friends or relatives. Start a pattern library where individual patterns are checked out and returned.

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